SPEECH

OF

HON. DAVID WILMOT, OF PENN'A,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 1850,

The Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union having postponed the consideration of the California Message, and taken up the bill making Appropriations for the support of the Military Academy—

Mr. WILMOT obtained the floor, and proceeded to say: That he should fail in his duty if he remained silent under the charge against those friendly to the unconditional admission of California, made upon them by the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. McCLERNAND.] He had himself heard of the existence of a party or faction in that House, so hostile to California as an independent measure, as to threaten resistance by revolutionary means, to paralyze the functions of Government, by a defeat of the ordinary and necessary appropriations. This faction he understood to be the allies and coadjutors of the gentleman from Illinois. He (Mr. W.) was not of them in spirit or in action.

Mr. WILLIAMS rose to a point of order. He submitted that it was not in order on this bill to discuss the question of the admission of California, &c.

Mr. PRESTON KING said, that as the whole question of the freedom of debate came into controversy on this point of order, he should ask that it be reduced to writing.

Mr. WILLIAMS referred to the rule on which he based his point of order.

The point of order was then reduced to writing, as follows:

"I call the gentleman to order, under the 31st rule of the House, which requires the speaker to confine himself to the question under debate, and it is not in order for the gentleman to discuss the merits of the California bill on the question now pending."

Mr. HILLIARD inquired whether the question was debatable?

The CHAIRMAN said, the Chair had not yet given a decision.

The CHAIRMAN then said that, looking to the range of debate which was allowed in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, the Chair did not feel authorized to pronounce the remarks of the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WILMOT] out of order. The Chair, therefore, overruled the point of order.

Mr. WILLIAMS said, that he appealed from the decision of the Chair.

Mr. WILMOT desired to be informed by the Chair, whether, when the House was in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, the state of the Union *generally*, as well as the immediate bill which was pending, was not under consideration?

The CHAIRMAN assented, remarking that it was upon that ground that he had overruled the point of order.

The question was then taken, "Shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the committee?" and decided in the affirmative, without a division.

So the decision of the Chair was *affirmed* by the committee.

Mr. WILMOT proceeded. Not until to-day, and from the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. McCLERNAND,] had he heard this charge of a desire to defeat the appropriation bills, made upon the friends of freedom. He had risen to repel any such charge, and to brand as false, all such rumors. Indeed, it was astonishing to him how such rumors could have obtained currency. He suspected that they existed only in the imagination of the gentleman from Illinois, and that he is the first to give them breath and circulation. In the caucus to which the gentleman refers, there was not a word said which could be tortured into such a construction. It is true that the friends of California desire action; it is true, they begin to apprehend that those who came here professedly her friends, are not so in good faith, but are prepared to give her the go-by. He desired to give to California precedence over the appropriation bills. He believed that the friends of California desired that course now; and the reason is this: the history of the Government, for twenty years, proves that the appropriation bills are not passed until the last days of the session; and he felt satisfied that when those bills were passed, that the day of adjournment will have arrived. The same men who now seek to stave off the admission of California—to put the consideration of that great measure behind other business, after a shameful delay of eight months—the same men, sir, will vote for and carry an adjournment, so soon as the appropriation bills shall have been passed. It is to insure action on this measure—to make it certain—to place it beyond doubt or contingency, that we desire to give it priority over the appropriation bills. The admission of California is the great measure of public interest, and ought to be first and foremost in our regards. It is uppermost in the minds and affections of the people, and should not by us be made subordinate to anything else. Judging from the declarations of gentlemen when we met here in December last, when the voices

of our constituencies were yet audible, he (Mr. W.) had supposed that there was not a northern man on this floor who was not in favor of the *speedy* and unconditional admission of California. Now we have the declaration by the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. McClernand,] that he is opposed to her unconditional admission. He, too, wishes to drive bargains in behalf of slavery. He wishes to make California purchase her way into the Union by large and important concessions to the slave interests. He is in favor of clogging her with measures for the government of the Territories—for the settlement of the Texas boundary—for the catching of runaway slaves—in short, with anything and everything which the advocates of slavery may demand. He would make California a pack-horse, to be loaded down with whatever burden his allies may choose to place upon her back. He would make her pay dearly for having incorporated into her constitution, that thing so hateful to him, the Proviso of Freedom. He (Mr. W.) was for California, separate from all other questions. He believed it due to that State, due to our ourselves, and, above all, required by the voice of a vast majority of the freemen for whom we profess to speak and act.

What, Mr. Chairman, is the spectacle presented here? After having acquired all the slave territory upon the continent—after having annexed Texas in hot haste, at andthe hazard of the war which followed that act; now, sir, the free State of California, with a voting population larger than that of one half of the slave States—larger than Florida, larger than Arkansas, larger than Texas, larger, in my judgment, than either Mississippi or Louisiana—this free State is denied admission into the Union, only because she is *free*. Yes, sir, her only offence is, that she has prohibited slavery within her borders. Those who now ask that action shall be had upon this subject, are denounced as men who desire to keep up a "miserable excitement" in the public mind. The gentleman from Illinois [Mr. McClernand] may, in his conception of things, regard it as a miserable vocation, for men to contend earnestly, seriously, manfully, for the advance of freedom, for the triumph of truth. The gentleman may regard those efforts only as noble and praiseworthy, which are put forth in the cause of slavery propagandism, and which are rewarded with the smiles of slaveholders and the prospect of office. A "miserable agitation" indeed! to stand up here and battle against the selfishness of the day, to utter unwelcome truths in the ears of lordly masters, to expose the schemes of unchastened ambition, to labor earnestly to bring back this Government to the policy of its founders, to insist that the policy of Jefferson, and the fathers of the Republic, should be applied to the Territories of this Union.

He (Mr. W.) could tell the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. McClernand] how this agitation, which he so much deprecates, might have been avoided. Had Representatives faithfully carried out the will of their constituents, the question of slavery in our Territories would have been settled three years ago, by the extension to them of that provision of the ordinance of 1787, which prohibits slavery except for crime. Of this there can be no doubt. He (Mr. W.) had said before, and he repeated now, that when the proviso was first introduced, there were but two northern votes against it in this House. One was that of the gentleman from Illinois, and the other that of his then colleague, now a member of the Senate, [Mr. Douglas.] That provision, which the gentleman has learned from his southern allies to denounce as most infamous, not only received the approval of the Representatives from the free States, but the unanimous and spontaneous approval of the people throughout every free State in this Union. The people by every form of expression endorsed it. Legislatures by unanimous resolutions endorsed it. Had the public voice then been faithfully obeyed in this, and the other wing of the Capitol, all that excitement and agitation about which the gentleman declaims with such genuine southern feeling, would have been avoided. The question would have been settled without agitation, without excitement; and in my judgment, without leaving behind any very serious heart-burnings upon the feelings of our southern friends. True, sir, they might have been ignorant of the merits of their distinguished champion, the gentleman from Illinois. The country might have never known that it held within its bosom, one of such broad, such comprehensive, such exalted patriotism. This, he (Mr. W.) confessed, would have been a serious loss to the country, and a great personal sacrifice to the gentleman from Illinois; but one which, he trusted, would have been cheerfully made, to avoid that agitation which so alarms and disturbs the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman, it has become quite common for certain gentlemen, distinguished alike for their patriotism and modesty, to claim for themselves that they stand upon a broad and national platform: and to denounce all who do not take position with them, as narrow-minded, sectional, and fanatical. Is slavery national, and freedom sectional? He (Mr. W.) had been taught by the fathers of the republican school, that freedom was broad and national, and slavery local and sectional. For this great doctrine he had struggled here, and for this he should continue to struggle, with all the feeble powers God had given him. This great doctrine of the universality of freedom, as one of the inalienable rights of man, and of the local character of slavery, as a State and sectional institution, constituted in the early days of the Republic, an established article in the republican creed. Hence the efforts of Jefferson to circumscribe the limits of slavery—efforts gloriously successful in the establishment of the ordinance of 1787—by which freedom was secured to the State which the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. McClernand] in part represents. But for this ordinance, which the gentleman now denounces as infamous, the curse of slavery would have rested like an incubus upon his own State. It would have gone there in defiance of the ordinance, had Illinois, at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, been blessed, or cursed (her people will judge which) with a superabundance of that broad and comprehensive patriotism of which the gentleman boasts. Instead of that free labor, which is fast giving to Illinois prosperity and greatness, the negro slave would have loitered in idleness upon her fertile fields, or been driven by the lash to his thriftless and unwilling toil.

He (Mr. W.) had followed in the footsteps of Jefferson; he had traveled in the beaten track of the fathers of the republican party. His effort

had been to circumscribe slavery within State limits—not to interfere with it there, but to resist its spread over the free Territories of the nation—to relieve the General Government from all responsibility for its existence or support, leaving it to rest, where alone it should rest, upon State sovereignty and State laws.

This question of slavery extension is a great pecuniary question—a question of capital—of money. The immense capital invested in slaves, as effectually controls this Government as does the capital invested in the funded debt of Great Britian control that. The old proverb that "money rules the world," is as true in political as in social affairs. The money invested in slaves, wields the destinies of this boasted free Republic. It shapes its policy to its own ends, it elects its Presidents, and dispenses its vast patronage; it proscribes its enemies, and exalts its friends. So far as legislation, and all the machinery of Government is concerned, it in truth and fact, constitutes the Republic itself. Well-informed southern men in this, and in the other branch of Congress, have estimated the amount of money invested in slaves at *sixteen hundred millions* of dollars. He thought the estimate a large one, but, that the sum is large almost beyond computation, is certain. This vast money power, extending over half of the Confederacy, and binding together in the bonds of a common pecuniary interest half the States, dictates law to this Republic, and rules with a despotism unrelenting as death. As a Democrat, he had ever been opposed to great monied intrests. The instincts of money are the same the world over—the same here as in the most grinding despotism of Europe. Money is cold, selfish, heartless. It has no pulse of humanity, no feelings of pity or of love. Interest, gain, accumulation, are the sole instincts of its nature; and it is the same, whethe invested in manufacturing stock, bank stock, or the black stock of the South. Intent on its own interest, it is utterly regardless of the rights of humanity. It would coin dividends out of the destruction of souls. Here, then, sir, we have *sixteen hundred millions of capital*—heartless, unfeeling capital, intent on its own pecuniary advancement. It is here, sir, in these Halls, in desperate conflict with the rights of humanity and of free labor. It is struggling to clutch in its iron grasp the soil of the country—that soil which is man's inheritance, and which of right should belong to him who labors upon it. *Sixteen hundred millions of dollars*, demands the soil of our territories in perpetuity, for its human chattels—to drive back the free laborer from his rightful field of enterprise—from his lawful and God-given inheritance. Slavery must have a wider field, or the money value of flesh and blood will deteriorate. Additional security and strength must be given to the holders of human stock. What though humanity should shriek and wail? Money is insatiate—capital is deaf to the voice of its pleadings. To oppose the extension of slavery—to resist in the councils of the nation the demands of this huge money power—to advocate the rights of humanity and of free labor, is, in the estimation of the gentleman from Illinois, to be sectional, and fanatical. To bow down to this money power—to do its bidding—to be its instrument and its tool, is doubtless, in the esteem of the gentleman, to stand upon a "broad and national platform." Freedom and humanity, truth and justice, is a platform too narrow for his enlarged and comprehensive mind,—the universality of slavery can alone fill its capacious powers. Slavery is Democratic—freedom fanatical! Sir, the gentleman no doubt sees fanaticism in a bold and fearless advocacy of the right. With some minds, nothing is rational and practical, except that which pays well. That slavery has heretofore paid well to those who labored in its service, he (Mr. W.) was prepared to believe. The history of this Government proves this. Its bills, however, have been at a discount since the presidential election of '48. Its last draft for the Presidency was dishonored. Its credit is shaken as a prompt paymaster; and the gentleman from Illinois may yet find himself in a fanatical position, expending his great powers, without adequate reward.

He (Mr. W.) was educated in the republican school. All his opinions upon political questions were strongly tinctured with the doctrines of that school. Nowhere in the teachings of the "fathers" had he found it laid down, that Democracy consisted in wearing the collar of slavery about his neck—in bowing down to a heartless money aristocracy—in supporting the extension of slavery over the continent. Such may be the doctrines of the gentleman from Illinois. He may best subserve his political ends, by standing shoulder to shoulder with the advocates of slavery extension. He may esteem that man a demagogue who boldly stands up in the face of power, in defiance of all opposition, the advocate of truth, the inflexible supporter of principle. There are demagogues, however, who succumb to power; who flatter the strong, and deride the weak; who are always found in support of that policy best calculated to advance their interests; who are ready to change opinions with a change of dynasty; and who ever lean for support upon some strong, and, as they believe, controlling interest. The slave power has so long held ascendency in this Government, that certain gentlemen seem to think that their political fortunes are secure, only when they stand in close alliance with slavery. They lean upon it for support; they look to it for promotion; they tremble and turn pale at its frowns. Many fear to stand on the rock of truth, unsupported save by a consciousness of rectitude and duty, who, sensible of their weakness, lean with their whole weight upon the strong arm of some great interest for support.

Mr. Chairman, (he continued,) I am charged by the gentleman from Illinois with practising the arts of the demagogue—with keeping alive a "miserable excitement," to secure my own elevation to office. When have I been found at the footstool of power? When have I addressed myself to propitiate its smiles or its favor? When have I abandoned principle, and taken refuge in the arms of any great moneyed interest for succor and protection? When have I proved false to my professions, or my pledges? Who is my accuser? No, sir, no; I have kept the faith; I have redeemed the solemn pledges given to a generous constituency—a constituency, sir, that have stood around me, and sustained me, with a devotion and constancy of which any man, the greatest in this nation, might well be proud; and, sir, I would sooner stand against the assaults of a thousand such as

the gentleman from Illinois, than disappoint the just expectations of the humblest man who gave me his confidence and support. Does the gentleman from Illinois know anything about the district from which I come? Has he ever informed himself as to the character and political principles of those I represent? For his information I will tell him, that it is one of the strongest Democratic districts in the State of Pennsylvania. If by Abolitionists he means a class of persons who assail the Constitution, and seek the overthrow of slavery by violent or unlawful means, then, sir, there are no Abolitionists in my district. If by Abolitionists, the gentleman intends to be understood all such as are opposed to the extension of slavery, then, sir, we are all Abolitionists together. It is the most radical, thorough, inflexible Democratic district in the State; and has ever been true to the maintenance of the great cardinal principles of the Republican party—opposed to a high protective tariff, to a national bank, to extravagant schemes of internal improvement by the General Government, to a distribution of the proceeds of the public lands; and in favor of the independent treasury, and of every other measure with which the Republican party has been identified for the last twenty years. Nay, more; it took the lead in Pennsylvania in support of many of these great questions. The Democracy of my district, advocated the independent treasury, and a more liberal revenue policy, before either of those great measures had commended themselves to popular favor with the party in that State. I was with them then, I am with them now. It is a part of their faith, and a part which will not be compromised or surrendered, that slavery ought not to be extended over the free soil of this continent. They embrace this great principle as a part of their creed; and they will stand by it to the last, against all temptation, and in the face of all opposition. They will adhere to their principles; they will make them the guide of their action, the rule of their conduct. They will follow no organization that has for its object the prostration of their principles. The gentleman from Illinois would read them out of the party. When they are excluded from the Democratic party, it will be past hope in Pennsylvania. That State will then have taken its position permanently in the ranks of the opposition. But I do not believe that they will allow the gentleman from Illinois to excommunicate them from the Democratic party; nor will the denunciations of the entire South, move them one jot or tittle from their principles.

I have said, Mr. Chairman, in my judgment this whole controversy would have been settled without agitation, and without this protracted struggle, which some gentlemen profess to think endangers the stability of the Union, had the Representatives from the North faithfully carried out the will of their constituents. I do not intend this remark as a reflection upon the gentleman from Illinois. His district, for aught I know, may be as pro-slavery as himself. It is not my purpose, Mr. Chairman, to reflect upon the motives or conduct of any gentleman in this House. It would be out of order for me to do so; yet I cannot but feel, that the true way to settle existing controversies is not by patched-up compromises, which ought to have, and can have, no force, if made against the public sentiment of the country. The principles upon which this controversy should be settled, are the same as those upon which all great political questions should be settled in a Government like our own—by an honest and faithful representation on this floor, and in the other branch of Congress, of the voice of our respective constituencies. Let every man vote as his constituents desire him to vote—as it was understood he would vote when a candidate for an election to a seat in this Hall; then, sir, you would have expressed the voice of the country. A settlement upon such a basis would stand—would command respect. It would be in harmony with the spirit and genius of our institutions. Upon this basis alone ought all great questions to be settled; and had it been faithfully acted upon, the present controversy would never have had an existence. The question of slavery in our Territories would have been long since settled, and settled on the side of freedom. But it would seem that a different atmosphere prevails here from that which gentlemen breathe at home. We have here political combinations looking to the Presidency, and to the patronage dispensed from that high office. Men become the mere partisans of presidential aspirants, instead of the faithful Representatives of the people. Party interests and party success exert a controlling influence over the deliberations of Congress. It is but a short time since, when the Representatives from the North who occupy seats on the other side of this House were, to a man, the advocates of positive legislative prohibition against the extension of slavery. Ay! sir, it was an "old principle of the Whig party! A devotedly-cherished doctrine! They had always opposed the controlling influence of slavery in the Government! The Democracy had always courted and succumbed to the slave power." Such, but a short time ago, was the universal language of northern Whigs, in and out of this House. I well remember, with what alacrity and zeal they walked up to the vote—always ready, always anxious. It was not then premature—there was no dodging in those days. Who so blind as not to see that a great change has come over the leaders of that party, and the representatives of that party on this floor? After having obtained power by professions of signal and lasting devotion to freedom, they now seek to retain it by compromises with slavery. They are now willing to abandon the old policy of enforcing the ordinance of 1787. Indeed, they have abandoned it for the "non-action" policy of the late Executive. The new dynasty it is said, favors a different policy; it is disposed so says rumor, to take passage in the omnibus which has been lumbering its way for months through the Senate. If this be so, we shall soon see a corresponding change in the position of party leaders. Leaders can change to order—the people are not so facile. The masses expect nothing, ask for nothing from Government, except just and wholesome laws. They love principle, and follow it with earnest and honest purpose, unless misled by ambitious and selfish men. They want the old policy restored, they want securities and guarantees for freedom—they want the Jeffersonian ordinance reënacted. If, by the force of circumstances, our Territories should be preserved from the threatened encroachments of slavery, and finally be admitted as free States, (a result which non-action leaves to the hazard of chance,) still slavery

will have triumphed, if we fail to assert the rights of freedom. The policy of this Government should be settled now and forever, against the further extension of slavery. This is rendered necessary by the startling demands of slavery, of its right to extend wherever the flag of the Union floats.

But, as I was saying, our friends on the other side have undergone a change; and I fear that another, and more sudden change awaits them. General Taylor is dead. The brave and honest old chief reposes in the grave. He has no more favors to bestow; the mantle of his power has fallen upon another. A late Senator, he who "*treads no step backward*," is elevated to the premiership. Henceforth his word is to have a magical influence and power. As Senator, and Taylor living, it had lost its charm; as premier, it is to be potential. I shall expect to see his discoveries in "physical geography" adopted by the faithful. We shall see, sir, what we shall see. Whatever course gentlemen may adopt, one thing is certain, that a large majority took their seats in the present Congress pledged to the support of the proviso. This fact is known to those who hear me, and to the whole country. It will stand in history, and the shameful record will also be written, that some were faithless to those pledges—that they sacrificed principle and honor, to propitiate power. There are not three men from the free States, on the opposite side of the House, who, when elected, were not understood by thire constituents to be in favor of legislative action against the extension of slavery. The same is true of a large majority of the Democrats. I know of some who gave their solemn pledges in writing, to stand by the principle to the last, and against all compromises, who have publicly declared their purpose to abandon it. This, sir, is shameful; yet it is by such treachery as this, that slavery is to gain a triumph. If the ordinance of freedom is to be thus defeated, it is not by the voice of the people; it is defeated by the betrayal of their Representatives. And is such a betrayal of high trusts to be dignified with the name of "compromise?" Do gentlemen expect such a settlement to stand? Is this the way in which peace is to be restored to the country? Are the people to be cheated, and then called upon to thank as public benefactors those who defrauded them? A distinguished Senator—he again who "treads no step backward"—in a recent speech, labored earnestly to prove that it was the duty of a representative to violate his instructions, to disregard the wishes of his constituents whenever, in his opinion, the public weal would be promoted thereby. He contended that the faithful representative—he who religiously observed his pledges, who faithfully and honestly, by his speech and votes, carried out in these Halls the views of his constituents—was a slave himself, and that a proviso was needed to free such a one from bondage. Sir, neither great talents, nor exalted position, can sanctify such doctrines. They strike at the foundations of our system of Government. They are anti-republican, anti-American. The Senator himself gave us a shameful example of their mischievous influence, when he turned his back upon the unanimous instructions of his own State. I subscribe to no such sentiments. I tolerate no such doctrines, in politics or in morals. I can respect, nay more, applaud the man who votes for slavery, when I believe that he is fairly reflecting the principles and feelings of those he represents; but I have only loathing and contempt for him who, by false professions, obtains a high place, and then betrays the confidence reposed in him.

Mr. Chairman, I do not desire agitation; but I cannot consent to avoid it, by a tame and silent submission to wrong. I will not see, without a struggle to avert it, this Government, established by the price of blood, upon the great foundations of Freedom, subverted to the accursed purpose of the extension of slavery. Its power shall never be wielded to such ends, if by any humble efforts of mine, I can prevent it. So long as there can be found such men in the North, as the gentleman from Illinois, to stand here and do the work of slavery, so long there will be agitation—an agitation that, by-and-by, will reach the constituents of the gentleman, and light up the fires of Truth and Freedom in his district. When that day comes, as it surely will come, we shall hear no more of the gentleman from Illinois, and the like of him.

A great truth cannot be trampled in the dust—a great principle of right cannot be broken down. Freedom will live—truth and justice will live—live in the hearts of men—live in the attributes of God—live forever.

This Government is not a government of slavery, but of freedom. We hold that slavery is not a national institution—that it should be kept within the limits of the States where it is tolerated; and these are doctrines which no pretended compromise can crush—no political combinations put down.

In the last presidential contest, the South brought to bear the influence of this sixteen hundred millions of slave property. She declared that no man should receive her support for the Presidency who did not bow down in abject and slavish submission to this mighty power of the South. Northern aspirants for that high office humbled themselves in the dust, but they failed of the reward. The price of shame and of humiliation was not paid, and I trust in God that it never will be paid. The ambitious and aspiring must learn that they cannot reach the Presidency by a base bowing down to the power of slavery. This lesson it is the duty of the people to teach them. This is the only remedy for doughfaceism—it is a sure and certain cure; it is a constitutional, a peaceful remedy—the remedy of the ballot-box. I shall not fear to resort to it, whenever occasion requires its application.

Mr. COBB, of Alabama, (Mr. WILMOT yielding the floor.) I wish to ask the gentleman if he would vote for any man for the office of President who was the owner of slaves?

Mr. WILMOT. Certainly, sir—most cheerfully, if he agreed with me in principle. I make principle the guide of my political action. Principle, and principle alone, controls my votes; not the location of candidates, or the nature of the property they may hold.

Mr. COBB. Would the gentleman own a slave himself?

Mr. WILMOT. I have no wish to be the owner of one. God forbid that I should ever be placed in circumstances where my interests or convenience should tempt me to become the owner of one. Upon this subject I confess that my moral sensibilities are not as keenly alive to the wrongs

of slavery, as they ought to be. I am not so good a man as I wish I was. I wish that I could feel for the wrongs of others as keenly as I feel a wrong when inflicted upon myself. I make no pretension to any such exalted virtue. Gentlemen who have done me the honor to listen to my speeches upon this subject, will remember, that I have never discussed this question in its moral aspects. That task I have left to others, better able to do it justice. I have examined it as a political question—as a question affecting the rights of the people, and the policy and character of the Government. Apart from all moral considerations, I am opposed to the further extension of slavery, as a political evil of the first magnitude. Slavery is anti-republican—it is aristocratic in all its tendencies and results—it is subversive of those great principles which lay at the foundation of all free Governments. It is a great moneyed interest—a vast pecuniary capital, with the heartless instincts of capital; and I am deadly hostile to the control of capital in this Government. It is in theory, and should be in practice, a Government of the people. It belongs to the free masses of the country. It is theirs to enjoy, to defend. They have a right to mould it to their pleasure, to determine its policy, to direct it to the advancement of their happiness and prosperity. Slavery seeks to wield it to its own selfish ends—to the support and perpetuation of its vast capital in human flesh and blood. I oppose the extension of slavery, because it is an element of weakness in States. I speak with no feelings of unkindness towards the South, but I utter my earnest convictions when I say, that the South is weak—weak in all the elements of strength and greatness—weak to resist a foreign foe, and only weak because of the institution of slavery. It is the men who perform the labor of a country that must defend it in the hour of danger. The men who perform the labor of the South are slaves. You dare not place the means of defence in their hands. You dare not give them arms, and teach them their use, lest they turn them against yourselves. If your young and able-bodied men go to the field in large numbers, you leave your families—your women and children, exposed to a terrible enemy at home. It is an element of weakness in States, and for this reason I am opposed to its extension.

Another reason: Notwithstanding the vast increase of slavery in the last sixty years, I entertain the hope, so ardently cherished by our fathers, of its ultimate extinction. I look forward to some day—remote it may be—when the South, in its own way, and by its own voluntary action, will set about the great work of emancipation, and the separation of the two races; in which work, I trust, the North will coöperate, to the full extent of its resources and power. That day must come, or there will come a night of terror and of blood. Slavery cannot be eternal. I cannot contemplate the prospect of perpetual slavery, without seeing the future of my country shrouded in darkness and in gloom. The extension of slavery will postpone the day of deliverance—magnify its difficulties, if, indeed, it does not make them insur mountable. Slavery I have before stated to be a pecuniary question—a question of capital, of dollars and cents. This is the light in which it is viewed by the master; to the slave it is a question of liberty, and of all that man holds dear and sacred. It will continue so long as it is valuable—so long will those who have property in it, hold on to slavery with a grasp that cannot be broken. Every one acknowledges that slavery would become valueless much sooner, if confined to its present limits, than if extended over a wider space. This, southern gentlemen tell us, is the reason why they are determined to extend it; and they charge upon us who are opposed to its extension, a desire to bring about abolition, by hemming them in, and thereby making their property worthless. We do no wrong to our southern friends in opposing the extension of slavery, although the policy of non-extension will hasten the day when slaves shall be without value, and slavery shall cease to exist. God has established certain great laws, by the silent and sure operation of which, slavery must ultimately be extinguished. It cannot long stand against the law of population, without constant expansion. If the laws of nature and of population necessarily tend to diminish the value of slave property, why should we be called upon to retard their operation—to save the institution of slavery from their influence by an extension of its area? Gentlemen of the South see that the field of slave labor is fast filling up; that the laborers are increasing, and that, unless the field is enlarged, labor will cheapen, and the laborer himself become worthless as an element of property. They see clearly that at no distant day they will be compelled, by the force of natural laws, to commence the work of emancipation, unless that day is put off by the opening of new fields for slave labor. Sir, I would not obstruct the operation of God's laws. I certainly would not interfere to save slavery from their influence. Looking, as I do, to the day of our ultimate redemption from this curse, I wish it to come before the evil shall have grown to such giant proportions as to defy our efforts for a peaceful deliverance. I do not wish the evil to grow beyond our control. We might, by a mighty effort, solve peacefully, and without blood, the problem of slavery, with ten millions of blacks. No human power can solve it with fifty or a hundred millions. It would break in fragments the strongest Government on earth; it would produce scenes of commotion, strife, and blood, such as the world never saw. Why will gentlemen bring certain and widespread ruin upon the country? It is the spirit of selfishness that invokes this destruction upon our land—the selfishness of great interests, the selfishness of capital, blind to everything but its immediate and proximate interest. For resistance to this spirit of selfishness—for seeking to avert from my country this terrible doom, I am assailed by the gentleman from Illinois, in borrowed wit and studied denunciation.

Mr. Chairman, talk as gentlemen may, there is a settled and fixed determination on the part of the people in the free States to resist, by every lawful and constitutional means, the extension of slavery. They may be betrayed by their representatives—I fear they will be; they may, for a time, be misled by those in whom they have placed confidence—party leaders may lick the dust at the bidding of slavery, may kiss its bloody hands—party organization may be used to crush the advocates of liberty—yet, sir, the great heart of the people beats for freedom. Gentlemen will learn that a cheat is no settlement—that a betrayal o

trust is no adjustment of difficulties—that the arrangements of presidential aspirants, is no compromise. Agitation is not to be quieted by the perpetration of wrong. The friends of freedom will counsel no resistance to established law; but they will not cease to appeal to the judgments and the hearts of men, in behalf of righteousness and truth. Gentlemen want peace, quiet. Cease to urge a wrong and you will have peace. What is the quiet they want? Freedom from agitation upon the subject of slavery. I will tell gentlemen how they can have quiet upon this subject: Separate the General Government from all responsibility for the existence or support of slavery. Keep your institution within your States, and you will have no agitation. Cease to exert the tyranny of slavery in this Government—immolate no more northern men. You provoke agitation by the injustice of your demands. You declare your purpose to extend slavery into free territory, and when we offer resistance—when we demand for freedom the protection and security of law, you cry out against agitation. You ask us to reverse the policy of the Government in behalf of slavery and its interests, and because we refuse, you complain of injustice and wrong. We are struggling to maintain, against your encroachments, the early and settled policy of the Government. I stand upon this question of slavery extension, where Jefferson, and Madison, and Henry, stood sixty years ago. Were they now living they would advocate the policy I have advocated. They did so, in their day and generation. They would do so now.

It is the vast increase of this slave capital which has taken place in the last half century, that creates all our present difficulties. From two hundred millions of dollars it has grown to sixteen hundred millions. This immense capital is struggling for perpetuity and power. It wishes to make slavery eternal. This is your fanaticism, gentlemen of the South—the fanaticism of slavery—of sixteen hundred millions of dollars! It is a cold, calculating fanaticism. It feeds on the souls and blood of men. Talk to me about fanaticism! May God preserve me from the fanaticism of slavery—from that fanaticism which forgets humanity and its rights, in the pursuit of an all-absorbing selfishness.

Mr. Chairman, I have been led almost unconsciously into these protracted remarks. I contemplated but a few words when I arose. My object more particularly was to address myself to the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. McClernand,] and to repel the charge brought by him against the friends of freedom, of a desire to defeat the appropriation bills. They have never entertained such a thought. They are loyal to the Constitution and to the Government of their country,—loyal, sir, and true. They desire action on California—that great question, which, more than any other, engrosses the mind of the nation. It is a shame—a personal dishonor to northern men—that California is not yet admitted into the Union. Why this protracted delay? Why this continual postponement of a measure which they all profess to favor? Are gentlemen afraid to act? Are we cowards, that we dare not perform our constitutional duty? Do we fear to take hold of the work which we came here to do? Sir, let us have done with this timid, this cowardly policy. Let us act. There is honor and safety in action—dishonor and danger in further delay. The gentleman from Illinois is waiting the action of the Senate on the "omnibus bill." After eight months of the session is exhausted, he is for giving time for slavery to mature its plans. When slavery is in danger, the gentleman is ever ready and prompt in action. No measure of slavery was ever delayed an hour for want of the gentleman's aid. Freedom must stand back, and only enter these Halls in the manner and at the hour slavery shall dictate.

I wish that the vote of to-day should arrest the attention of the country. Let it be known throughout the length and breadth of the land, that the consideration of California was postponed to make way for an appropriation bill for the support of the Military Academy at West Point,—a bill which there was no occasion for pressing upon our attention, and which could have been acted upon a fortnight or a month hence, without any detriment to the public service. This was done by the votes of the South, united with the great body of northern Whigs, and a few northern Democrats. California postponed after eight months' delay, by the strong vote of *ninety-three to sixty!* Yet, in the face of this vote, men will go home and try to make their constituents believe that they were friendly to the early and unconditional admission of California.

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